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## Diachronic construction grammar vs. grammaticalization theory

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# Diachronic construction grammar vs. grammaticalization theory

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## Abstract

With grammaticalization theorists becoming increasingly aware of the relevance of constructions to their discipline, one of them even defining grammaticalization as the creation of new constructions, precisely the problem which construction grammarians engaging in diachronic research are addressing (or one they should be addressing because to date the discipline has not really taken off), the question rises of whether grammaticalization theory could simply be turned into the historical branch of construction grammar, or whether diachronic construction grammar has its own *raison d'être* as a separate discipline. Since grammaticalization theoretical practice is fairly narrowly focused on the change of extant constructions along a path towards the grammatical end of the meaning continuum, there definitely is a need for a wider discipline that also concerns itself with the primary emergence of constructions. Though grammaticalization presupposes 'constructionalization', the two developments need to be kept apart because not all constructions go on to grammaticalize. They have apparently been conflated, however, in two recent discussions of the evolution of argument structure constructions (Schøsler 2003 and Trousdale 2005).

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The first decade of the 21st century is not unlikely to go down in the history of linguistics as the time when linguists of ostensibly different persuasions at last found themselves a flag to unite behind. Previously, linguists calling themselves either "functional" or "cognitive" were often first and foremost positioned negatively, as not being advocates of the generativist paradigm, no alternative unifying theoretical framework having been put forward. The start of the present century may well have seen the creation of such an alternative frame, however, when an approach to language of a sufficiently general nature to allow it to function as an umbrella for much of the functional/cognitive work that has been going on for a while was explicitly presented as a "new theoretical approach": construction grammar (cf. the title of and the drift

of the argumentation in Goldberg 2003).<sup>2</sup> The low level of technicality of the approach, the fact that many functionalists and cognitivists have long been working with a pre-theoretical constructional notion anyway, and indeed the inherently human need to find strength in numbers by banding together behind a standard, are all factors that might ensure that construction grammar (henceforth CG) will indeed turn into a veritable paradigm within which most non-generativists will be able to congregate. For the time being this very much remains to be seen, of course — and it is a matter for linguistic historiography to determine the extent to which CG and various functional approaches match — but the possible beginnings of such a development might already be noticeable in the work carried out within the confines of a more specialized discipline, viz. the one whose object of study is a particular kind of language change and which is often referred to as *grammaticalization theory* (henceforth GT).<sup>3</sup>

Though grammaticalization is studied by both formalists and functionalists, the latter have long been referring to constructions in a more or less loose fashion (as repeatedly pointed out by Traugott 2003, 2005, 2006), but with the recent advent of CG as a general approach to language some have now started to ask what CG can do for GT, and vice versa (Traugott 2005, 2006; Trousdale 2005; Bergs 2006; Bergs and Diewald to appear). Indeed, if constructions turn out to be crucially involved in grammaticalization processes, what is there to stop grammaticalization theorists from joining the growing army of construction grammarians? They could strengthen its diachronic division, say, or at least constitute a specialized battalion within that division. If we restrict our scope to those researchers doing historical linguistics who have explicitly aligned themselves with CG, the discipline we could term *diachronic construction grammar* is definitely still very much underdeveloped, a few isolated endeavours like Israel (1996), Verhagen (2002) and Kemmer and Hilpert (2005) notwithstanding. Most of the construction grammatical work carried out to date is of a theoretical and/or synchronic descriptive nature. But can we simply subsume GT under diachronic CG, or, further even, simply fuse the two disciplines? Joan Bybee, a leading grammaticalization theorist, recently characterized grammaticalization as “the creation of new constructions” and GT as being concerned with the question “How do languages acquire grammar?” (Bybee 2003a: 145-146). If we combine both characterizations and rephrase the question as “How do languages acquire constructions?” we end up with what the brief of diachronic CG should be (or part of it at least). Bybee’s characterizations are vulgarizations, however, not precise descriptions of grammaticalization theoretical practice. To find out to what extent diachronic CG and GT are overlapping disciplines, it might therefore be useful to have a closer look at the way constructions have been thought to be relevant in GT. It might also be informative to

explore to what measure diachronic construction grammarians are “doing” grammaticalization and/or consider themselves to be doing grammaticalization. These will be the topics of sections 2 and 3 of this paper, respectively. In section 4 the compatibility question will be approached from a different end. It will review two recent proposals on the diachrony of constructions of a type that has featured very prominently in construction grammar ever since Goldberg (1995), i.e. argument structure constructions. Section 5, finally, will conclude how diachronic CG and GT complement each other.

## **2. Constructions in grammaticalization theory**

Though the importance of constructions, in the pre-CG sense of (possibly meaningful) formal units larger than words, has recently been highlighted in grammaticalization theoretical work, especially by Traugott (2003, 2005, 2006), the manifold ways in which they are relevant have so far not been catalogued. I will argue in this section that constructions have at least a four-fold significance for GT.

The first is a strictly formal one and may appear trivial, but nevertheless needs to be stated in the light of early definitions of grammaticalization that referred to morphemes or words becoming grammatical, like Meillet’s and Kuryłowicz’s:

l’attribution du caractère grammatical à un mot jadis autonome (“the attribution of grammatical character to an erstwhile autonomous word”; Meillet 1912: 131, quoted and translated in Hopper and Traugott 2003: 19)

Grammaticalization consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status, e.g. from a derivative formant to an inflectional one. (Kuryłowicz 1965: 69)

Though in CG morphemes and words are constructions in their own right, since constructions can be either atomic or complex (cf. Goldberg 2003: 220, Croft and Cruse 2004: 255), the first way in which constructions are relevant to GT relates to the latter kind: it is not just morphemes and single words that become functional, multi-word lexical material can also be at the centre of specific grammaticalizations. Examples are *sort of* and *kind of*, discussed (inter alia) in Tabor (1994), and *instead of* (from *in stede of*), *indeed* (from *in dede*), *anyway* (from *any way*), discussed in Traugott (2003). This is what the construction word refers to in Hopper and Traugott’s (2003: 18) definition of grammaticalization: “the change whereby lexical

items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions”.

The “in certain linguistic contexts” part of this definition hints at the second relevance of constructions for GT: the morphosyntactic context that source items occur in plays an important role in grammaticalization. The definition offered in Traugott (2003: 645) is more explicit on this: grammaticalization is “[t]he process whereby lexical material in highly constrained pragmatic and morphosyntactic contexts is assigned grammatical function, and once grammatical, is assigned increasingly grammatical, operator-like function”. Maybe Scott DeLancey was the first to point to the importance of the morphosyntactic context using the construction word:

The starting point of the process of grammaticalization is a productive construction: NP with genitive dependent, matrix with complement clause, conjoined or chained clauses, etc. The precondition for grammaticalization is that there be some lexeme or lexemes which occur frequently in this construction for some semantic/pragmatic reason, e.g. phasal or modal complement-taking verbs like ‘finish’ or ‘want’, or semantically non-specific transitive verbs like ‘use’ or ‘hold’ conjoined or serialized with more specific verbs. This usually involves a lexeme with a very general meaning, which can therefore be used in a wide range of contexts.

This situation, in which a particular construction — a productive syntactic structure with a specific lexeme in a specific slot — is a useful and regularly-used locution in the language, is the initial point of grammaticalization. (DeLancey 1993: 2)

Bybee (2003b: 602-603) concurs, invoking a classic example:<sup>4</sup>

The recent literature on grammaticization seems to agree that it is not enough to define grammaticization as the process by which a lexical item becomes a grammatical morpheme, but rather it is important to say that this process occurs in the context of a particular construction (see Heine [2003] and Traugott [2003]). In fact, it may be more accurate to say that a construction with particular lexical items in it becomes grammaticized, instead of saying that a lexical item becomes grammaticized. For instance, several movement verbs appropriately fit into the following constructional schema of English:

- (1) [[movement verb + Progressive] + purpose clause (*to* + infinitive)]

E.g., *I am going to see the king*  
*I am traveling to see the king*  
*I am riding to see the king*

However, the only example of this construction that has grammaticized is the one with *go* in it. The particular example of this construction with *go* in it has undergone phonological, morphosyntactic, semantic, and pragmatic changes that have the effect of splitting the particular grammaticizing phrase off not only from other instances of *go* but also from other instances of this [movement verb + Progressive + purpose clause] construction.

Likewise, Himmelmann (2004: 31) has stated that:

Strictly speaking, it is never just the grammaticizing element that undergoes grammaticization. Instead, it is the grammaticizing element *in its syntagmatic context* which is grammaticized. That is, the unit to which grammaticization properly applies are *constructions*, not isolated lexical items.

All these citations, and Hopper and Traugott's definition of grammaticalization, reveal that, constructionwise, GT is first and foremost involved with partially substantive, non-atomic constructions, rather than with fully schematic or atomic ones (for exemplifications of the cline from fully substantive to fully schematic constructions, and of the separate cline from atomic to complex, see Goldberg 2003: 220 and Croft and Cruse 2004: 248). Some grammaticalization theorists have paid lip service to the idea of including changes involving schematic constructions, though. Bybee (2003a: 146), for instance, proffers the following syllogism: "If grammaticalization is the creation of new constructions (and their further development), then it also can include cases of change that do not involve specific morphemes, such as the creation of word order patterns." This position remains unargued, however, and she continues with illustrations of what she terms "the canonical type of grammaticalization, that in which a lexical item becomes a grammatical morpheme within a particular construction". Haspelmath's (2004: 26) "current definition" of grammaticalization also refers to constructions but lacks all reference to substantive elements: "[a] grammaticalization is a diachronic change by which the parts of a constructional schema come to have stronger internal dependencies." But the explication that the definition is designed to allow for fully sche-

matic constructions is consigned to a footnote: “[t]hus, word-order change consisting of a change from freer to more fixed word order falls under grammaticalization as well [...], not just changes involving free words becoming dependent elements [...]” (Haspelmath 2004: 38). Talmy Givón, on the other hand, whom Traugott (2005, 2006) refers to as the first grammaticalization theorist to have made reference to constructions (in Givón 1979),<sup>5</sup> has extensively discussed developments like the shifts from topic into subject, from topic construction into passive construction, from topic sentences into relative clauses, and from finite clauses in concatenated structures into non-finite complementation structures in terms of grammaticalization (or syntacticization). Givón (1995: 10) indeed defines grammaticalization more broadly as “the rise of morpho-syntactic structure”.

Not everybody in GT agrees, however, that fully schematic constructions fall within its reach. For Himmelmann (2004: 33-34), for instance, changes involving fully schematic constructions do not represent examples of the phenomenon:

[...] grammaticization applies only to the context expansion of constructions which include at least one grammaticizing element (the article in ART-NOUN constructions, the preposition in PPs, etc.). Context expansion may also occur with other types of constructions, for example a certain word order pattern, a compounding pattern or a reduplication pattern. These are not considered instances of grammaticization here.

The warning he adds in a footnote is relevant as well:

We may note in passing that there is a tendency in the literature to use grammaticization as a cover term for all kinds of grammatical change, including simple reanalyses, analogical levelings and contact-induced changes. In this way, the concept *grammaticization* loses [sic] all theoretical significance and becomes simply a synonym for *grammatical change*. (Himmelmann 2004: 39)

Another leading grammaticalization theorist, Christian Lehmann, though not himself adverse to including word order fixation in grammaticalization (e.g. see Lehmann 2002), has in a similar vein dissociated himself from definitions of grammaticalization like “grammaticalization is the genesis of grammar/grammatical structure/grammatical items”, maintaining that

it is unwise to elevate grammaticalization to the status of ‘creation of grammar’ *per se*. This necessarily renders the concept wide and heterogeneous, with the consequence that it becomes less apt to generate falsifiable empirical generalizations and to be integrated into an articulated theory of language change and language activity. (Lehmann 2005)

Hopper and Traugott (2003: 24, 60), for their part, oppose the inclusion of word order fixation. They do discuss Givón’s (1979) work on clause combining and clause fusion, but add the proviso that it can only be included “[i]f grammaticalization is defined broadly so as to encompass the motivations for and development of grammatical structures in general” (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 176).

There is only agreement in GT, therefore, that changes happening to (partially) substantive constructions belong to its object of study, but the third and fourth way in which constructions are relevant to the discipline crucially involve a higher level of abstraction, and hence more schematic constructions. Both have to do with what Traugott (2005) has called the “force of analogy” in grammaticalization, but this force operates in two ways that should be kept apart. Analogy is first of all responsible for the host-class expansion that is often involved in grammaticalization (Himmelmann 2004: 32), i.e. the expansion of the class of elements a substantive grammaticalizing element is in construction with. Hopper and Traugott (2003: 66) described this as the “generalization of a rule or construction”. Their example is the development of French negation: *ne ...pas* was first combined with movement verbs and could subsequently be combined with all verbs. In other words, the grammaticalization of a partially substantive construction resulted in a construction whose substance remained unchanged (at least initially) but which was nevertheless more schematic in that its selection restrictions had loosened (later a new construction developed which retained only some of the substance of the original construction, when it became possible to drop *ne*). The example makes clear, therefore, that a construction can become more schematic without becoming any less substantive, and that, in other words, formal schematicity needs to be distinguished from semantic schematicity. This distinction will become relevant in section 4 of this paper.

Analogy can also be responsible for the creation of new substantive constructions, however, as is obvious from the work of Bisang (1998a, b), Hoffmann (2004) and Noël (2005). Bisang (1998a: 16) has argued that “[w]ithin a given construction, certain positions can attract further items into a new function by the mechanism of analogy”, which he illustrates with examples of serial unit constructions in verb serialization languages like Chinese,



Khmer, Yoruba and Jabêm. A serial unit expresses a single state of affairs using more than one verb, looking like (1) in its most schematic form.

(1) (NP) V (NP) V (NP) V (NP) ...

It consists of a main verb plus positions for verbs marking tense, aspect and modality (so-called TAM verbs), so-called coverbs (which are used for case-marking) and so-called directional verbs (which indicate the direction of the action with regard to the speaker or the centre of interest in a particular context). For instance, the serial unit in Chinese looks like (2).

(2) TAM COV V-TAM COV Vd TAM

Each of the positions in this schematic construction are what Bisang (1998a: 36) calls “attractor positions”: “they represent slots which *attract* linguistic items in order to grammaticalize them”, i.e. “they operate as a kind of *melting pot* or as a kind of *catalyst* for linguistic items to be grammaticalized into different types of grammatical functions”. For instance, if a speaker chooses to use a particular verb in one of the TAM positions in the construction, a verb that has never been used there before, it will be interpreted by the hearer as a TAM marker by virtue of the fact that it occurs in this position. If other speakers follow suit and also start using this verb in this position, the verb grammaticalizes into a TAM marker. In other words, the verb grammaticalizes by analogy to other verbs occurring in this position in the construction; or in a mixture of construction grammatical and grammaticalization theoretical terms, the schematic construction “coerces” a particular interpretation, leading to reanalysis, and a new substantive construction is born.

Hoffmann (2004), apparently quite independently, attributed a similar role to schematic constructions in the grammaticalization of low-frequency complex prepositions like *by dint of*, *in conformity with*, *in readiness for*, *in proximity to*, etc. Given their low frequency, these substantive constructions cannot have grammaticalized the normal way, through routinization resulting from frequent use. Unlike much more frequently used preposition-noun-preposition (or PNP-) constructions like *in terms of*, *in view of* and *in the face of*, the low-frequency PNP-constructions must have grammaticalized by analogy with the high-frequency ones. Hoffman (2004: 195) extrapolates: “In such an approach, grammaticalization would result in the establishment of constructional schemas whose slots can be filled with suitable lexical items.” However, Noël (2005) has criticized Hoffman for conflating two developments

that should perhaps be kept separate: the emergence of schematic constructions and grammaticalization. What could have happened is that speakers distilled a schematic construction from the (structurally and semantically similar) frequent complex prepositions that resulted from a number of separate grammaticalizations and that this abstract construction was then used productively: speakers used it to construct novel complex prepositions and it led hearers to accept these innovations so that they could be propagated. This as well presages some of the discussion in section 4.

To sum up this section, there is agreement in grammaticalization theoretical circles that constructions are germane to GT. As far as the input and output of grammaticalization changes is concerned, however, there is disagreement among grammaticalization theorists on whether anything but partially substantive constructions can be involved. Schematic constructions can play a role as an analogical force behind grammaticalization, initiating a substantive construction's expansion or setting off the establishment of new substantive constructions, but there is no consensus in GT that they can also be grammaticalizing/grammaticalized constructions.

### **3. Grammaticalization in construction grammar**

In CG lexical items are part of the grammar: words are constructions. They are always substantive, and often more atomic than the constructions that are traditionally thought of as “grammatical”, but they are constructions nevertheless. Consequently, grammaticalization, as a change from lexical to grammatical, is not an issue in CG: construction grammatical units can by definition not become more grammatical (cf. Bergs 2006: 180-181: “Elemente in der Konstruktionsgrammatik [können] *per definitionem* nicht grammatischer [werden]”). Accordingly, one might expect construction grammarians (when pushed) to subscribe to a very broad view of grammaticalization, i.e. to conceive of grammaticalization simply as the emergence of constructions in a language. This indeed appears to be the view taken by Michael Tomasello in one of the introductory chapters (“Origins of language”) to his book on a “usage-based” (read: construction grammatical) theory of language acquisition:

Human beings use their linguistic symbols together in patterned ways, and these patterns, known as linguistic constructions, take on meanings of their own — deriving partly from the meanings of the individual symbols but, over time, at least partly from the pattern itself. The process by which this occurs over historical time is called *grammaticalization* (or syntacticization), [...]. (Tomasello 2003: 8)

A few pages on, it becomes even clearer that he underwrites a view of grammaticalization that includes the emergence of schematic constructions:

[...], it is a historical fact that the specific items and constructions of a given language are not invented all at once, but rather they emerge, evolve, and accumulate modifications over historical time as human beings use them with one another and adapt them to changing communicative circumstances [...]. Most importantly, through various discourse processes (involving various kinds of pragmatic inferencing, analogy making, and so on) loose and redundantly organized discourse structures congeal into more tightly and less redundantly organized constructions [...]. This happens both on the level of words and on the level of more complex constructions.

[...]

On the level of constructions, instead of sequences of words becoming one word, whole phrases take on a new kind of organization; that is, loose discourse sequences become more tightly organized syntactic constructions. (Tomasello 2003: 14)

He goes on to list examples from Givón (1979) that were already mentioned above.

William Croft, on the other hand, who in his *Radical Construction Grammar* (Croft 2001) not only theorizes about constructions but also about grammaticalization, does not equate grammaticalization with the emergence of constructions, virtually *ex nihilo* as Tomasello might appear to imply. Though he is not explicit on the definition of grammaticalization he adheres to, quotes like the following make clear that for Croft (2001: 126) grammaticalization is a change happening to an extant construction: “In grammaticalization, constructions acquire new semantic uses over time, and can diverge syntactically as well (through replacement, renewal, or split).” In his description of the grammaticalization process, Croft does not specify that source constructions need contain substantive elements, though he does refer to morphological and phonological changes, which presuppose substance:

The grammaticalization process can be seen to involve three steps at the micro-level. The first step in the process is that a construction is extended to a new function, previously encoded by some other construction. This initial step is a crucial one, because the old and new constructions contrast in the new function. [...]

In the next step, the old construction in the new function is eliminated, or marginalized to the point that it no longer significantly contrasts with the old one. [...]

At this point, the construction has become conventional in its new function. The construction is polysemous with respect to its original meaning. The independence of the construction in its new function is demonstrated by the last step in the grammaticalization process: the new construction undergoes shift in grammatical structure and behavior in keeping with its new function. These shifts will manifest themselves as syntactic, morphological, and phonological changes that occur only to the construction in its new function, thereby making it distinct from the old construction in its original meaning. (Croft 2001: 126-127)

Many of the constructions that Croft applies the term grammaticalization to are similar to the ones covered in Givón (1979). At the same time, the following quote seems to indicate a recognition of the crucial role of substantive elements: “If, [...], we take a diachronic perspective, we find that the pattern of change implies that if anything, it is the universal features of the meanings of content words that influence the evolution of the grammatical inflections and constructions they occur in” (Croft 2001: 130).

It turns out that the descriptive work of construction grammarians actually engaging in diachronic research (one exception that I know of notwithstanding; see section 4) only addresses partially substantive constructions. It is not impossible, therefore, that this research could be incorporated seamlessly even into a narrowly conceived GT, even though some of this work hardly refers to the grammaticalization theoretical literature. To allow this, two conditions will have to be met. First, grammaticalization theorists will have to agree that the constructions described are grammatical constructions. As I indicated already, for construction grammarians this is not at all a relevant question: if it is a construction, it is part of the grammar. For the grammaticalization theorist, on the other hand, grammaticalization entails a semantic change towards more grammatical meaning. The question then rises of which meanings count as grammatical. In the words of Hopper and Traugott (2003: 24), “how far we shall be prepared to extend the notion of ‘grammaticalization’ will be determined by the limits of our understanding of what it means for a construction to be ‘grammatical’ or have a grammatical function.” The second condition that needs to be met is whether the alterations the construction goes through correspond to the changes identified in GT as being constitutive of grammaticalization. Heine (2003: 579) provides a conveniently concise list of the “mechanisms” involved in grammaticalization (or the “micro-changes” involved in the “macro-

change” grammaticalization, in the terminology of Andersen to appear) about which there is a fairly general consensus:<sup>6</sup>

- (i) desemanticization (or “bleaching,” semantic reduction): loss in meaning content;
- (ii) extension (or context generalization): use in new contexts;
- (iii) decategorialization: loss in morphosyntactic properties characteristic of the source forms, including the loss of independent word status (cliticization, affixation);
- (iv) erosion (or “phonetic reduction”), that is, loss in phonetic substance.

In the remainder of this section I will survey some of this diachronic construction grammatical work, research efforts counting as such being those of researchers who explicitly align themselves with construction grammatical theorizing. An early contribution is Israel (1996), which discusses the increase in the productivity of the *way*-construction (which also received a chapter in Goldberg 1995) in terms of “analogical extension” and “increasingly abstract constructional schemas”. Israel distinguishes between three uses of the construction, exemplified in (3)-(5) (Israel’s examples (1)-(3)).

- (3) Rasselas dug his way out of the Happy Valley.
- (4) The wounded soldiers limped their way across the field.
- (5) Convulsed with laughter, she giggled her way up the stairs.

All three uses entail the movement of the subject referent along the path indicated by the prepositional phrase, but in (3) the verb codes a means of achieving this motion, i.e. through the creation of a path, in (4) it expresses the manner in which the motion is achieved, while in (5) it describes an incidental activity of the subject while she moves along the path. Are these grammatical meanings? Those of us who still like to set aside grammatical meaning from other kinds of meaning would feel hard-pressed to consider these to be examples of the former kind, first and foremost perhaps because of their representational, propositional nature. Givón (1998: 53-54), for instance, has observed that:

Grammar is not, primarily, about extracting the information of ‘who did what to whom when and where and how’. Rather, the functional scope of grammar is, predominantly though not absolutely, about the *coherence relations* of the information in the clause to its surrounding discourse.

Givón (1998: 52) confines “the part of grammar responsible for propositional semantics” to the “semantic roles of participant[s]” and “semantic transitivity (state vs. event vs. action)”. The majority of grammatical “sub-systems” have “discourse-pragmatic scope”, the most obvious ones being:

1. grammatical roles of subject and direct object
2. definiteness and reference
3. anaphora, pronouns and agreement
4. tense-aspect-modality and negation
5. de-transitive voice
6. topicalization
7. focus and contrast
8. relativization
9. speech acts
10. clausal conjunction and subordination (Givón 1998: 54)

Traugott (1982), who, following Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Silverstein (1976), distinguishes between a propositional/ideational, an expressive/interpersonal and a textual meaning component, recognizes that, though grammaticalization often involves a meaning-shift from the propositional to the expressive or the textual components (or from the textual to the expressive), it can also be a meaning-shift within the propositional component. When that happens, however, “it is more likely to involve” a change from “less personal to more personal” than the reverse, with “more personal” meaning “more anchored in the context of the speech act, particularly the speaker’s orientation to situation, text, and interpersonal relations” (Traugott 1982: 253). One of her examples is spatial *till* developing into a temporal preposition. In Traugott (1995: 46) she reiterates that it may be the case that all grammaticalization involves “subjectification”, defined as follows:

‘Subjectification in grammaticalisation’ is, broadly speaking, the development of a grammatically identifiable expression of speaker belief or speaker attitude to what is said. It is a gradient phenomenon, whereby forms and constructions that at first express primarily concrete, lexical, and objective meanings come through repeated use in local syntactic

contexts to serve increasingly abstract, pragmatic, interpersonal, and speaker-based functions. (Traugott 1995: 32)

Even though the propositionality of the meaning of the *way*-construction might not preclude it from being a grammatical marker, therefore, the answer to the question of whether its evolution involves subjectification might.

If grammaticalization theorists were to investigate whether this construction has grammaticalized, the focus of their attention would be on the substantive element in the construction (*way*) and they would consider whether the construction's extensions (in other words, its host-class expansion) could be related to changes in the meaning of this element (bleaching coupled with subjectification). This is not how Israel operates, however, even though he makes cursory reference to some of the GT literature at the end of his paper. He considers the three uses of the construction to have "developed independently through a process of gradual, analogical extensions" (Israel 1996: 217). On the basis of an inventory of the verbs appearing in the construction in a diachronic corpus of 1,211 examples from the OED on CD-ROM, the manner use of the construction is identified as the oldest one (mid 14<sup>th</sup> century), the means use coming second (end of 17<sup>th</sup> century), and the incidental activity use arriving last (in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), but this evolution is not couched in terms of a change in the meaning of the construction. Indeed, as the first paragraph of the "conclusions" section of his paper makes clear, the operative question for Israel is not "Did the meaning of this construction change, and if so in what way?", but rather "When did the construction emerge?".

The *way*-construction emerged gradually over the course of several centuries. There is no single moment we can point to and say, "This is where the construction entered the grammar." Rather, a long process of local analogical extensions led a variety of idiomatic usages to gradually gain in productive strength even as they settled into a rigid syntax. As the range of predicates spread, increasingly abstract schemas could be extracted from them and this in turn drove the process of increasing productivity. (Israel 1996: 227)

Were the question to be put whether a case could be made for a narrowly conceived grammaticalization of the *way* construction, the answer might well be "hardly". In addition to the possible problem of the objective nature of its meaning, its extension, from manner over means to incidental activity, seems unaccompanied by a change in the meaning of the substantive core of the construction, whether semantic reduction or pragmatic strengthening. A

construction has emerged, and if its function cannot strictly (or traditionally) be termed “grammatical”, what has emerged could perhaps be called a partly schematic idiom, but in GT the naissance of an idiom does not amount to grammaticalization.

Like Israel (1996), Verhagen (2002) is primarily concerned with the promotion of a non-structural, construction grammatical (“usage-based”) approach to language, through an illustration of how the history of certain constructions presupposes that linguistic knowledge is basically of a holistic nature. Here there is even less of a suggestion that the historical development of a construction equals grammaticalization in GT. There is not a single reference to any of the grammaticalization theoretical literature. One of the two major examples Verhagen discusses might not necessitate this, given that it is the development of the Dutch cognate of the English *way* construction, to which the same comments apply. Its meaning may not be of a grammatical nature and its history does not show the hallmarks of the evolution of constructions that do develop grammatical meanings.<sup>7</sup> However, the other example, the development of the Afrikaans discourse marker *intendeel*, is an unmistakeable case of grammaticalization, not of lexical material turning into a grammatical marker, but of a grammatical marker developing a new grammatical function. Whereas originally it could only follow negated clauses, having exactly the same meaning as its Dutch ancestor *integendeel* (‘on the contrary’), it can now also come after positive clauses and have a mere reinforcing function (‘in fact’). Since this strengthening of the speaker’s own stance was already part of the discourse marker’s original meaning, while the contrast with someone else’s stance is lost, this is a patent instance of semantic reduction (both uses are illustrated in (6) and (7), examples (1) and (2) in Verhagen 2002: 404).

- (6) Dit impliseer egter nie dat die uiteindelijke resultate van Botha (1988) verwerp word nie; intendeel, sy gevolgtrekkings met betrekking tot die konseptualisering van reduplikasies sal juis handig blyk te syn.

‘However, this does not imply that the final results from Botha (1988) are rejected; *on the contrary*, his conclusions concerning the conceptualization of reduplications will turn out to be useful.’

- (7) Botha (1988) sluit tot ’n bepaalde mate by Moravcsik (1978) aan as hy aandui dat ‘vermeerdering’ die belangrikste betekenseienskap is van reduplikasies. Intendeel, in die formulering van sy interpretasiereël vir reduplikasies, word ‘vermeerdering’ aangedui as enigste betekeniswaarde...



‘Botha (1988) agrees to some extent with Moravcsik (1978) when he indicates that “increase” is the most important semantic property of reduplications. *In fact*, his rule of interpretation for reduplications marks “increase” as the only semantic value...

For Verhagen, however, the only difference between the *inteendeel* construction and the *way* construction is a difference in complexity.

Langacker (1990, 1998), on the other hand, does proceed from the GT literature and, through his definition of grammaticalization as “the process [...] whereby “grammatical” elements evolve from “lexical” sources” (1990: 16), implicitly subscribes to a narrow conception of grammaticalization. The quotes are scare quotes, of course, since in Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar there is no dichotomy between grammar and the lexicon:

It is of course a fundamental tenet of cognitive grammar that all grammatical units have some kind of conceptual import, so that lexicon and grammar form a continuum divisible only arbitrarily into separate “components”. As an element becomes grammaticized, it therefore moves along this continuum rather than jumping from one discrete component to another, and it undergoes a change of meaning rather than becoming meaningless. (Langacker 1990: 16)

More specifically, Langacker builds on Traugott’s (1988: 410) observation that in grammaticalization “meanings tend to become increasingly situated in the speaker’s subjective belief/attitude toward the situation”. In fact, Langacker does little more than cast into the terminological and representational mould of Cognitive Grammar the idea that “at least some instances of grammaticization involve subjectification” (1990: 16). In Langacker (1998: 75) he argues that subjectification amounts to the loss of objective meaning rather than a gain in subjective meaning, making subjectification a kind of semantic reduction. In construction grammatical terms the examples he discusses are partially substantive constructions: the future sense of “go”, modal auxiliaries, and perfective *have*. Langacker does bring to bear the notion of *schematicity*, but this receives a semantic rather than a formal interpretation: “a grammaticized element is quite *schematic* semantically (i.e. it lacks the specificity and rich detail typical of lexical items)”, the meanings of “prototypical exemplars” of grammaticalized elements “are limited to general specifications concerning fundamental “epistemic” issues (reality, identification, etc.)” (1990: 13). Schematicity used in this sense does not stand in

opposition to substantiveness or formal specificity, therefore, which, as mentioned before, is important to remember for the discussion in the next section.

To sum up the present section, diachronic construction grammarians are first and foremost interested in the question of how constructions come into being, irrespective of whether there is also a source construction, and if there is one, irrespective of the nature of its semantic change. Not all of them connect with grammaticalization theoretical research. Some of those who do apply the term grammaticalization consider every emergence of a construction to be grammaticalization, thereby subscribing to the most inclusive conception of the phenomenon, broader even than what grammaticalization theorists consider to be a broad stance. Others (or one other at least) take a narrower view that overlaps with “standard” GT and consider grammaticalization to be the change whereby a partially substantive construction develops a more grammatical meaning.

#### **4. Argument structure constructions and grammaticalization**

The discussion in the previous section has brought to the surface that we need to distinguish between two quite different evolutions, whether we would like them both to be called grammaticalization or not. On the one hand, there is the development through which certain structural patterns acquire their own meanings, so that they add meaning to the lexical elements occurring in them. On the other hand, patterns that have acquired meaning can be subject to semantic change, and one possible change is a move towards the grammatical end of the meaning continuum. Both processes result in new constructions, but only the products of the latter can be guaranteed to have a “truly” grammatical meaning. Both processes involve schematization (generalization), but while the former can be reduced to it, it is only a factor in the latter. Developments of the latter kind fall within the narrowly defined realm of GT, whereas the former kind is also part of the much broader brief of diachronic CG. However, if we do not want to lose track of the specific contribution of GT, it is important to keep these two different-natured evolvments apart. The failure to do so recently led to two proposals to completely subsume the emergence of argument structure constructions under GT (Schøsler 2003, 2005, to appear; and Trousdale 2005), which, as I will argue in this section, might not be without problems. Having a closer look at these suggestions could contribute to a better understanding of the distinction between grammaticalization and what I will henceforth be calling *schematization* (one kind of a more general phenomenon one could dub *constructionalization*, i.e. the kind through which partially or fully schematic constructions arise), and of the difference in scope of GT and diachronic CG.<sup>8</sup>

Lene Schøsler has repeatedly turned to GT to account for the fact that certain verb valency patterns are not merely formal but also meaningful patterns; in other words, for the fact that they have turned into argument structure constructions, though only in Schøsler (to appear) does she also connect with CG. Schøsler refuses to completely subscribe to the construction grammatical view that all recurring patterns are constructions, however, distinguishing between “default patterns”, which do not express content, and valency patterns she calls “constructions”, which have become “linked to special content”. The latter are claimed to be the result of grammaticalization; they have “become ‘more grammatical’, in the sense that patterns that used to be open to different verb senses specialise in order to contain only verbs of the same or related sense” (Schøsler 2005). One of her illustrations is based on data from Goyens (2001) on the origin of verbs which are used in the “dative construction” in modern French, i.e. verbs used in a divalent pattern taking an indirect object (in addition to a subject). These verbs “share the particular feature that they all express — more or less clearly — a psychological relation between on the one hand a human being who is the ‘experiencer’ [...], and who has pleasant or unpleasant feelings, and on the other hand another human being or an object being the cause of these feelings [...]”, the experiencer being expressed by the indirect object and the cause by the subject (Schøsler 2005). Examples of such verbs are *agréer, aller, appartenir, arriver, bénéficier, chanter, convenir, coûter, déplaire, échapper, échoir, importer, incomber, manquer, mentir, messeoir, nuire, obéir, parvenir, peser, plaire, prendre, profiter, répugner, ressembler, réussir, revenir, seoir, sourire* and *tarder*. The emergence of this dative construction, i.e. the association of the specified meaning with the S-V-IO pattern, is a fairly recent development, because up until the 17<sup>th</sup> century the experiencer did not need to be expressed by an indirect object but could also be expressed by a direct object, as shown in Table 1 for the three verbs *obéir, ressembler* and *mentir*.

Table 1: The evolution of the valency patterning of the etymons of the French verbs *obéir, ressembler* and *mentir* (adapted from Goyens 2001: 56, cited in Schøsler 2003: 154)<sup>9</sup>

	Latin	Anc. frç.	Moy. frç.	XVIe s.	XVIIe s.	Frç. mod.
<i>Obéir</i>	--- datif	COD COI	COD COI	COD ---	--- COI	--- COI
<i>Ressembler</i>	accus. datif	COD COI	COD COI	COD COI	COD COI	--- COI
<i>Mentir</i>	accus. ---	COD COI	COD ---	COD ---	--- COI	--- COI

In other words, over the course of 18 centuries there has been a change in the valency patterning of the verbs expressing this “psychological relation”, leading to a situation where they need to be used with an indirect object. This valency pattern is therefore said to have become “specialized” — it is exclusively used for the expression of this relation — and such a specialization is interpreted to amount to grammaticalization, more specifically “secondary grammaticalization” (defined in Traugott 2004 as “the development of an already grammatical form into a yet more grammatical one”), though no account is offered of how this situation may have come about.

So what could have happened? Assuming that Schøsler is right in her characterization of this French dative construction (which is a moot point — for instance, is there really an experiencer in the case of *ressembler*?), and also assuming that the way constructions come to be part and parcel of the repertory of the means of expression available in a language mirrors how they are acquired by the individual (as established experimentally and on the basis of corpus research by Goldberg, Casenhiser and Sethuraman 2004), what one may hypothesize to have happened is that the pattern took over its meaning from a verb frequently occurring in it and that the pattern was extended to verbs with a similar meaning, and later to verbs which only by a long stretch of the imagination can be argued to have a similar meaning (for to what extent do *obéir* and *ressembler* match the meaning of *mentir*, *plaire* and *répugner*?). This is a matter for historical research (and it hints at a research agenda for diachronic CG), but assuming that this is what happened,<sup>10</sup> only the last part of this developmental chain shows any similarity with the phenomena described in GT (broadly conceived) in that it involves semantic reduction coupled with host-class expansion. Semantic reduction presupposes its opposite, however: before it could lose meaning the dative pattern first had to acquire it. The meaningless “default pattern” had to turn into a construction before it could grammaticalize: the grammaticalization of (schematic) constructions presupposes schematization. If grammaticalization is involved in the development of argument structure constructions, it cannot therefore be reduced to the establishment of a symbolic link between a pattern and a meaning.

This hypothesis about what may have taken place in the case of the French dative construction owes much to a proposal by Trousdale (2005)<sup>11</sup> that the English transitive construction is a result of grammaticalization, which, in turn and in part, goes back to a suggestion by Tomasello (1998) that

[...] in English, the basic transitive construction has as its prototype utterances such as *He broke the vase* in which an animate actor does something to cause a change of state in an undergoer (Hopper & Thompson 1980). But the construction over historical time has been extended to other, less prototypical situations in which the “force dynamics” are not so clear or are only metaphorical, as in, for example, *John entered the room* and *The car cost \$400*. (Tomasello 1998: xviii)

Referring to the Langackerian notion of semantic schematicity (see section 3), Trousdale calls such extension *schematization*, which he equates with grammaticalization: “Grammaticalization can be seen both as increased entrenchment and as increased schematization (cf. Bybee 2003[a]), or perhaps more succinctly, as the entrenchment of schemas.” Schematization in his terminology therefore amounts to semantic reduction coupled with host-class expansion. The transitive pattern needed to adopt its force dynamic meaning before this could be weakened, however; i.e., the pattern had to become a (schematic) construction before the construction could change. For that reason the crystallization of a construction (i.e. the establishment of a connection between a (morpho)syntactic configuration and a meaning; schematization in my terminology whenever the configuration is not fully lexically specified) is logically distinct from its ensuing evolution. If the latter leads to diminished referentiality (increased abstractness, schematicity in the Langackerian sense), in the case of the transitive construction to the point of (apparent?) meaninglessness, it might just meet some of the GT criteria for grammaticalization, i.e. those that non-substantive constructions are susceptible to.<sup>12</sup>

The fact that the present-day English transitive construction is ostensibly void of all meaning (though no construction grammarian could accept its meaninglessness) naturally facilitates our acceptance of the involvement of a grammaticalization change, whereas the manifest propositionality of Schøsler’s very concrete characterization of the meaning of the French dative construction impedes such a conclusion, just like Goldberg’s (1995: 151) characterization of, for instance, the English ditransitive construction as being “associated with a highly specific semantic structure, that of successful transfer between a volitional agent and a willing recipient”. But these characterizations might well be exaggerations resulting from their authors’ intention to establish the very fact that these syntactic configurations are carriers of meaning. Indeed, something one might want to consider is whether the “systematic metaphors” that “license extensions from the basic sense” of Goldberg’s (1995: 151) argument structure constructions could be the motor behind something resembling a grammaticalization change.<sup>13</sup> Whether or not subjectification can be invoked in descriptions of the history

of these kinds of argument structure construction remains to be established. Fact is that their meanings have to do with semantic roles of participants, a semantic area that Givón (1998: 52) labelled as belonging to “the part of grammar responsible for propositional semantics”. Even in the absence of subjectification these meanings could therefore be granted to be grammatical meanings.<sup>14</sup>

## 5. Concluding remarks

From a construction grammatical perspective it is of course unfortunate that the term *grammaticalization* has been appropriated by GT to refer to a specific kind of semantic change (with possible formal correlates). In CG constructions are by definition grammatical, so that the historical emergence of constructions amounts to becoming part of the grammar, and what better term to denote this than *grammaticalization*. The term has been used in this sense in CG. On the other hand, if one recognizes that constructional meanings can be positioned on a cline from lexical to grammatical, or from less to more grammatical, grammaticalization can, also in CG, be understood in the GT sense of a change in the direction of the grammatical end of the continuum. What diachronic CG has so far failed to do, however, is draw an explicit distinction between the initial formation of a construction, i.e. a primary association of a meaning with a particular (morpho)syntactic configuration, and the possible subsequent change of a construction into a “more grammatical” one. I have termed the former development *schematization* (when the resulting construction is not fully substantive) and have reserved the term *grammaticalization*, as in standard GT, for the latter. Even if in practice it might not be possible to determine where (or rather, when) primary schematization ends and where grammaticalization begins, the two developments need to be kept apart, because though grammaticalization presupposes schematization (a grammaticalizing construction is never fully substantive), schematization does not imply grammaticalization.

Another reason to differentiate between the two is that schemas of different levels of abstraction can be involved in the conceptualization of similarities both between source constructions and between grammaticalized constructions. In her work on the grammaticalization of partitive patterns into degree modifier patterns, for instance, Traugott (2005, 2006) distinguishes *micro-constructions* (“individual construction types”, e.g. *a lot of* vs. *a bit of*), “meso-constructions” (“sets of similarly behaving constructions”, e.g. *(a) kind/sort of* vs. *a bit/lot of*) and “macro-constructions” (“high-level schemas, the highest level relevant for the discussion at hand”, e.g. the Partitive Construction vs. the Degree Modifier Construction). It would therefore be wrong to conclude from the preceding paragraph that GT is not itself involved

with schematization. As explained in section 2, schemas, as ingredients of analogical innovations, can be a causal factor in certain grammaticalizations.

Nevertheless we can conclude that if ever diachronic CG takes off as a veritable discipline, it will have a wider scope than GT. It might well be that fully schematic constructions can follow a path of change very similar to certain partially substantive ones, but pleas like Trousdale's (2005) for "a constructional, cognitive account of grammaticalization", and like Wiemer's (2004) and Wiemer and Bisang's (2004) before him for a construction-based approach to grammaticalization to replace the morphology-based approach, should not confuse us into thinking that constructionalization equals grammaticalization. One of the questions diachronic CG should address is the very general one of how and when constructions become part of the inventory of the means of expression available in a language, whereas GT has already specialized in the problem of how and when a subset of these acquire (more) grammatical functions. GT studies how patterns that have accumulated meaning may develop in a certain direction; it remains for diachronic CG to document how and when these patterns accumulated their meaning in the first place, and how they develop in directions other than the one that constitutes the research subject of GT.<sup>15</sup> The choice between a broad (inclusive of schematic constructions) or a narrow (exclusive of schematic constructions) view of grammaticalization is therefore of no consequence for the question of whether there is a need for a historical construction grammatical discipline wider than GT.

## Notes

- 1 The research reported on in this paper was made possible by the Research Fund of the University of Leuven (contract nos. OT/00/05 A5136 and OT/04/12 B2957). I am grateful to the Leuven linguistics department, the FEST research unit, and especially Kristin Davidse, for their hospitality. Lene Schøsler and Graeme Trousdale should be thanked for sending me their manuscripts (Schøsler 2005 and to appear; Trousdale 2005) and Timothy Coleman for his comments on an earlier version.
- 2 Goldberg (2003) does not use the name *construction grammar* as such, but talks of "constructionist approaches", which she contrasts with "the mainstream 'generative' approach". Croft and Cruse (2004: 257) distinguish between "four variants of construction grammar": Construction Grammar (in capital letters; e.g. Kay and Fillmore 1999),

- construction grammar (without capitals; e.g. Lakoff 1987 and Goldberg 1995), Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991) and Radical Construction Grammar (Croft 2001).
- 3 *Grammaticalization theory* is widely used as a discipline name, but some prefer simply to refer to *grammaticalization*, as in the textbook on it (Hopper and Thompson 2003[1993]), by analogy with *phonology*, *morphology*, *syntax*, etc., all names both of fields of study and of what they study. Heine (2003: 575), on the other hand, distinguishes between *grammaticalization* (“specific linguistic phenomena”), *grammaticalization studies* (“the analysis of these phenomena”) and *grammaticalization theory* (“a descriptive and explanatory account of these phenomena”). Without wanting to take sides in the debate on the theoretical status of this account (see the discussion in Campbell (ed.) 2001), I myself will use *grammaticalization theory* when referring to the discipline, not least because it allows reference to *grammaticalization theorists*, in the absence of a coinage like *grammaticalizationists* (*grammaticicists* is already in use but has a much wider reference). A two-word designation also nicely parallels that of the other framework under consideration in this paper.
- 4 Some grammaticalization theorists prefer the term *grammaticicization* to *grammaticalization*, or use the terms interchangeably, like Bybee (2003a).
- 5 Givón (1979), however, does not make the explicit theoretical point made by DeLancey (1993) which was quoted above.
- 6 As exposed below, Traugott (1995) does not agree that grammaticalization always involves semantic reduction, but insists instead that it is normally accompanied by the accrue-ment of subjective meaning. Langacker (1998), on the other hand, has construed subjectification as bleaching.
- 7 Semantic reduction did occur early on in the history of the Dutch *way* construction, but it involved a verb that prototypically enters the construction (*banen*) rather than the constant substantive element (*weg*).
- 8 The following criticism of Schøsler (2003, 2005, to appear) has evolved somewhat from that offered in Noël (2005b).
- 9 Goyens’ original terminology was replaced by that employed in Schøsler (2003). COD and COI stand for direct object and indirect object, respectively.
- 10 It may not have been without consequence that in the evolution from Latin *placere* to modern French *plaire*, probably a prototypical representative of the class of verbs enter-



ing the construction, this verb was consistently used with a dative/indirect object (Goyens 2001: 50).

- 11 As one who explicitly connects with CG and cognitive linguistics, I consider Trousdale to be the exception to the generalization mentioned above that diachronic construction grammarians have so far only considered partially substantive constructions, but since he calls for a construction grammatical approach to grammaticalization, and not for a GT approach to constructions, he is perhaps better characterized as a grammaticalization theorist who connects with CG than as a diachronic construction grammarian who connects with GT.
- 12 Fully schematic constructions are of course not vulnerable to Heine's (2003: 579) third and fourth mechanisms, i.e. decategorialization and erosion.
- 13 A comparison of the historical evolution of the English, Dutch and German ditransitive constructions (Coleman and Devos 2006) has revealed, however, that argument structure constructions can also shed meanings. Whereas the ditransitive construction could once have a benefactive meaning in all three languages, the benefactive ditransitive has only remained fully productive in German. It has completely disappeared in Dutch, and in English a beneficiary must also be a recipient, unlike in German.
- 14 The same might be said about the "grammaticalness" and the "subjectivity" of the *way* construction discussed in section 3, but the history of this construction documented so far is not suggestive of semantic reduction. It could be informative to relook at it in this light, but until further notice this is a case of schematization without grammaticalization.
- 15 More specific subsidiary research questions for diachronic CG include the following: How do constructions accumulate meanings? What universal or language specific extension mechanisms play a part in this? How do fluctuations between constructional prototypes and constructional peripheries evolve? How do the relationships between competing constructions develop?

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